

## **The New Grade 8 Writing Assessment: Introduction**

### **Why did I receive this informational packet?**

If you have received this informational packet, you are an important link in informing teachers and/or students about the changes to the Georgia Grade 8 Writing Assessment. These changes were made in order to align the statewide writing assessment with the English Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards.

### **To whom should this informational packet be distributed?**

It is important that this electronic document be **distributed immediately across content areas** to all 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers, special education teachers, English language learner (ELL) teachers, school level administrators, system testing directors, testing coordinators, system curriculum directors, language arts coordinators, system special education directors and system ELL directors.

### **What is the purpose of this informational packet?**

The purpose is to introduce teachers and students to the new Georgia Grade 8 Writing Assessment. The packet contains information that will help teachers provide middle school students (specifically current 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders) with the appropriate instruction prior to the first implementation of the Georgia Grade 8 Writing Assessment.

### **When will the new assessment be administered?**

The first operational assessment of the new Grade 8 Writing Assessment will be January 17 & 18, 2007 (specific dates will be provided). Until the new assessment is operational in 2007, the current Grade 8 Writing Assessment will remain unchanged and be administered in January 2006.

In preparation for the operational assessment, a sample of schools was selected to participate in a field test of the new Georgia Grade 8 Writing Assessment. The field test will be administered October 5-12, 2005. Each system that has been selected to participate in the field test will be notified on August 3, 2005.

### **How will the new Grade 8 Writing Assessment be different from the MGWA?**

The name has changed. The new assessment will be referred to as the Grade 8 Writing Assessment. Middle Grades Writing Assessment (MGWA) will no longer be used.

Previously all students had a choice of a narrative, persuasive, or expository genre to address a particular topic. This has changed. Students will be given either an expository topic or a persuasive topic. Because topics will be spiraled, students may receive either one of the two writing topics thus requiring them to be prepared to write in both genres. The new Grade 8

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Writing Assessment will assess expository and persuasive writing as defined by the Georgia Performance Standards.

Topics will be released after each test administration and will become a part of the practice topic bank.

Student writing will be assessed analytically in four domains: *Ideas, Organization, Style, and Conventions*. The current domain of Content & Organization will be split into two separate domains: Ideas and Organization. Sentence Formation, Usage and Mechanics, currently evaluated as a separate domains, will be assessed within the Conventions domain.

All students throughout the state will take the assessment on the same day. There will also be one day for make-up. Specific dates for the administration will be provided. Testing time will be 100 minutes. No extra time will be allowed except as specified in a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP), Section 504 Plan, or Test Participation Plan (TPP).

ELL students will be allowed to use a translation dictionary (paper only) if it is specified in the student's TPP.

### **How should I use this informational packet?**

The following materials are included:

- A Description of Expository Writing for the new Grade 8 Writing Assessment
- A Sample Expository Writing Topic & Student Checklist for Expository Writing
- A Description of Persuasive Writing for the new Grade 8 Writing Assessment
- A Sample Persuasive Writing Topic & Student Writing Checklist for Persuasive Writing
- A Description of the new Grade 8 Analytic Scoring System

Use these materials to familiarize teachers and/or students with how expository and persuasive genres will be evaluated in a testing context. The Descriptions provide characteristics of effective writing and a parallel list of what we encourage students not to do on the writing test. The Sample Writing Topics provide opportunities for practice. The Writing Topic page contains a genre-specific Writing Checklist to help students respond to the topic in a way that is appropriate to the assigned genre.

### **When will more information be made available about the new Grade 8 Writing Assessment changes?**

An assessment and instructional guide will be made available in July 2006. The guide will include the complete scoring rubric and anchor papers for each score point in each domain. Additional information will be made available throughout the 2005-2006 school year.

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## Description of Expository Writing for the Grade 8 Writing Assessment

An effective expository composition . . .	An effective expository composition is NOT . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishes a clear controlling idea</li> <li>• Uses clear, complete descriptions and/or explanations to develop the controlling idea</li> <li>• Contains an appropriate organizational strategy for the purpose of explanation, description, comparison and contrast, or problem and solution</li> <li>• Is multi-paragraph writing</li> <li>• Fully develops the controlling idea with specific details and examples</li> <li>• Blends personal experience and knowledge to inform the reader about the topic</li> <li>• Uses a lively writing voice that develops the reader's interest</li> <li>• Uses engaging language and varied sentences</li> <li>• Introduces the reader to the topic, fully develops the topic, and provides a sense of closure</li> <li>• May contain a short narrative in the introduction to engage the audience</li> <li>• Contains correct sentences, usage, grammar, and spelling that make the writer's ideas understandable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copying words or information from the writing topic</li> <li>• A list of facts, a story, and/or personal anecdotes that are unrelated to the topic</li> <li>• A response in which ideas are not presented in logical order</li> <li>• A single paragraph</li> <li>• Formulaic writing or a repetitive, standard five-paragraph formula that overshadows the information instead of explaining it</li> <li>• An encyclopedic coverage of facts or an abundance of facts that are unrelated to the topic</li> <li>• Flat, uninteresting writing</li> <li>• An essay that contains imprecise language and little sentence variety</li> <li>• Writing that provides information without introducing, developing, and/or concluding the topic</li> <li>• Writing that consists entirely of a story that does not inform the audience about the topic</li> <li>• Incorrect sentences, usage, grammar, and spelling that distract the reader from the writer's ideas</li> </ul>

## Sample Writing Topic Page

### Expository Writing Topic

#### Writing Situation

School rules help keep students safe and able to concentrate on their school work. One rule that affects students is the dress code. Your principal is reviewing the school's dress code and wants some information from the students about their clothing choices.

#### Directions for Writing

Write an essay for your principal comparing and contrasting the way you dress for school and the way you dress for other activities such as playing outside or going places with friends. Include specific details so that your principal will understand the differences in your clothing choices.

### Student Writing Checklist for Expository Writing

#### Prepare Yourself to Write

- Read the Writing Situation and Directions for Writing carefully.
- Brainstorm for ideas.
- Decide what ideas to include and how to organize them.
- Write only in English.

#### Make Your Paper Meaningful

- Use your knowledge and/or personal experiences that are related to the topic.
- Explain, clarify, and define your ideas.
- Establish a clear controlling idea.
- Fully develop your controlling idea with specific, supporting details.
- Organize your ideas in a clear and logical order.
- Write an expository essay and stay on topic.

#### Make Your Paper Interesting to Read

- Think about what would be interesting to the reader.
- Use a lively writing voice that shows your interest in the topic.
- Use precise, descriptive, vivid words.
- Vary the type, structure, and length of your sentences.

#### Make Your Paper Easy to Read

- Indent to start a new paragraph.
- Use effective transitions.
- Write in complete and correct sentences.
- Capitalize, spell, and punctuate correctly.
- Make sure your subjects and verbs agree.

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## Description of Persuasive Writing for the Grade 8 Writing Assessment

An effective persuasive composition . . .	An effective persuasive composition is NOT . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly establishes a position on the issue and fully develops an argument with specific details and examples</li> <li>• Defends the writer's position with relevant evidence that is appropriate for the audience identified in the writing topic</li> <li>• Demonstrates that the writer can anticipate and counter the audience's position on the issue</li> <li>• Uses specific facts, personal experience and knowledge, and/or statistics to support the writer's position</li> <li>• Includes appeals to logic and/or emotion</li> <li>• Contains an organizational structure appropriate for persuasion</li> <li>• Is multi-paragraph writing that supports a specific side of an issue</li> <li>• Uses appropriate writing voice to engage the reader</li> <li>• Uses precise language and varied sentences</li> <li>• Introduces the reader to the issue, fully develops a position, and provides a sense of closure</li> <li>• May contain a short narrative in the introduction or a skillful extended narrative that supports the writer's position</li> <li>• Contains correct sentences, usage, grammar, and spelling that make the writer's ideas understandable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formulaic writing or a repetitive, standard five-paragraph formula that repeats the writer's position and supporting reasons</li> <li>• A list of irrelevant ideas or supporting ideas that are inappropriate for the audience identified in the writing topic</li> <li>• Writing that fails to consider the audience's position on an issue</li> <li>• A list of facts, a story, and/or personal anecdotes that are unrelated to the writer's position</li> <li>• A chance for the writer to simply vent about a topic</li> <li>• Writing in which ideas are presented in an illogical or confusing order</li> <li>• A single paragraph</li> <li>• Flat, uninteresting writing</li> <li>• An essay that contains imprecise language and little sentence variety</li> <li>• Writing that presents ideas without introducing, developing, and/or providing closure</li> <li>• A story that does not address the persuasive purpose of the topic</li> <li>• Incorrect sentences, usage, grammar, and spelling that distract the reader from the writer's ideas</li> </ul>

## Sample Writing Topic Page

### Persuasive Writing Topic

#### **Writing Situation**

School rules help keep students safe and able to concentrate on their school work. One rule that affects students is the dress code. Your principal is considering changing the school's dress code and wants some information from the students. Decide on how you would change your school's dress code.

#### **Directions for Writing**

Write an essay to convince your principal to change your school's dress code. Be sure to include detailed reasons and examples.

### Student Writing Checklist for Persuasive Writing

#### **Prepare Yourself to Write**

- Read the Writing Situation and Directions for Writing carefully.
- Brainstorm for ideas.
- Consider how to address your audience.
- Decide what ideas to include and how to organize them.
- Write only in English.

#### **Make Your Paper Meaningful**

- Use your knowledge and/or personal experiences that are related to the topic.
- Express a clear point of view.
- Fully support your position with specific details, examples, and convincing reasons.
- Include an appeal to logic and/or emotions.
- Organize your ideas in a clear and logical order.
- Write a persuasive paper and stay on topic.

#### **Make Your Paper Interesting to Read**

- Use examples and details that would be convincing to your audience.
- Use appropriate voice that shows your interest in the topic.
- Use precise, descriptive, vivid words.
- Vary the type, structure, and length of your sentences.
- Use effective transitions.

#### **Edit and Revise Your Paper**

- Consider rearranging your ideas and changing words to make your paper better.
- Add additional information or details to make your paper complete.
- Proofread your paper for usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

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<b>Domain 1: Ideas</b>	
<b>Components</b>	<b>Description</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Controlling Idea</li> <li>Supporting Ideas</li> <li>Depth of Development</li> <li>Sense of Completeness</li> <li>Relevance of Detail</li> <li>Awareness of Genre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Controlling idea is focused and fully developed</li> <li>Relevant, logical supporting ideas are appropriate to the assigned genre of writing</li> <li>Supporting ideas are fully elaborated with appropriate examples and details</li> <li>Response contains complete, full information</li> <li>Anticipates and addresses reader concerns and perspectives</li> </ul>
<b>Domain 2: Organization</b>	
<b>Components</b>	<b>Description</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus</li> <li>Sequence of Ideas</li> <li>Grouping of ideas within paragraphs</li> <li>Genre-specific strategies</li> <li>Transitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustained focus</li> <li>Appropriate and logical progression of ideas</li> <li>Related ideas are grouped in a logical manner within paragraphs</li> <li>Organizing strategy is appropriate to the assigned genre of writing and facilitates the communication of ideas</li> <li>Varied transitional elements effectively link ideas and parts of the paper</li> </ul>
<b>Domain 3: Style</b>	
<b>Components</b>	<b>Description</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Word Choice</li> <li>Audience Awareness</li> <li>Voice</li> <li>Sentence Variety</li> <li>Genre-specific strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate, precise, and engaging language</li> <li>Writer employs a variety of genre specific strategies (e.g., rhetorical questions, emotional appeals) to engage the reader</li> <li>Writer's voice is sustained throughout</li> <li>Effective variety of sentence beginnings, structures, and lengths</li> </ul>
<b>Domain 4: Conventions</b>	
<b>Components</b>	<b>Description</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sentence Formation</li> <li>Usage</li> <li>Mechanics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistently correct sentence formation in a variety of contexts: simple, complex, and compound sentences formed correctly; few sentence fragments and run-ons; functional fragments included for effect; correct end punctuation; and consistent clarity of meaning at the sentence level</li> <li>Consistently correct usage in a variety of contexts: subject-verb agreement, word forms (nouns, adjectives, adverbs), pronoun-antecedent agreement, verb tense, and commonly confused homonyms</li> <li>Consistently correct mechanics in a variety of contexts: punctuation within sentences, spelling, capitalization, and paragraph indentation</li> </ul>